

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2010/11

East Canadian High Arctic Light-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla hrota*

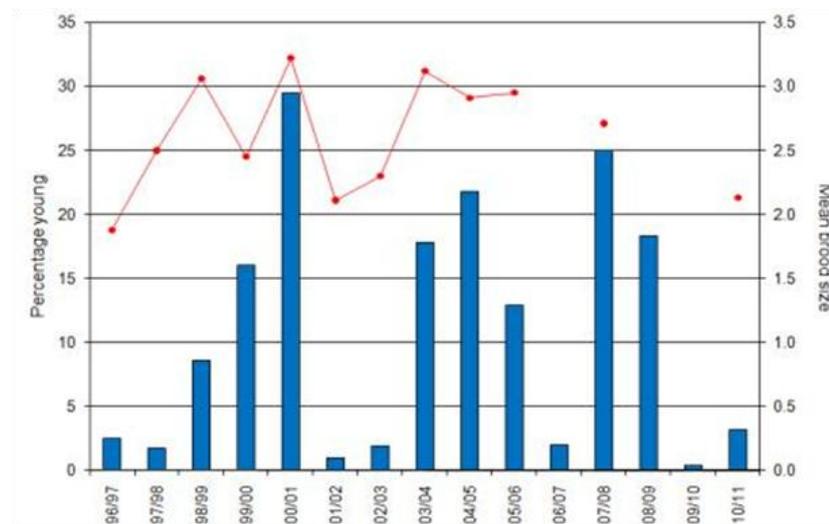
1. Abundance

The 15th East Canadian High Arctic (ECHA) Light-bellied Brent Goose Census was undertaken in October 2010. Ground counts were carried out across all the main wintering haunts in Ireland, and sites in Iceland were covered by aerial survey. Counts were mostly made over the weekend of 16-17 October.

A total of 38,216 geese were counted, with 85% of the birds seen at sites around the Irish coastline. Just over 5,000 birds were recorded in Faxaflói and Breidafjörður in Iceland. Peak counts in Ireland include Strangford Lough (28,600), Lough Foyle (2,650) and Tralee/Castlemaine (1,066). Numbers at Strangford Lough, the main wintering site for the Brent Geese, increased in the week following the census to a peak of over 30,200 birds on 22 October.

2. Breeding success

Age assessments were made of over 11,670 individuals, of which only 3.2% were young birds. The mean brood size was 2.13 young per successful pair.



The mean percentage of young (blue columns) and mean brood size (red circles) of East Canadian High Arctic Light-bellied Brent Geese, 1996/97-2010/11. Note; no brood size data are available for 2006/07, 2008/09 or 2009/10.

3. Discussion

Results from the 2010 census produced a population estimate for the ECHA Light-bellied Brent Goose which was only slightly higher (0.6%) than the previous year. Although breeding success was slightly higher than in 2009, overall it was a poor breeding season, with the proportion of young being well below the most recent 10-year mean (2000/01-2009/10, $13\% \pm 3.5$ SE).

The trend in the ECHA Light Bellied Brent population has mirrored their breeding success, particularly in recent years. The increase in size between 2002/03 (when complete censuses of all the main sites in Ireland and Iceland began) and 2007/08 reflects the number of good and above average breeding seasons during that time; the peak in 2007/08 reflecting the exceptionally good breeding year in 2007. Numbers since then have levelled and this is most likely a consequence of the two poor seasons in 2009 and 2010.

4. References

Holt, CA, GE Austin, NA Calbrade, HJ Mellan, C Mitchell, DA Stroud, SR Wotton & AJ Musgrove. 2011. *Waterbirds in the UK 2009/10: The Wetland Bird Survey*. BTO/RSPB/JNCC. Thetford.

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Goose & Swan Monitoring